

DATING EARLY PHOTOGRAPHS

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Mid 19th

Early 20th

Mid 20th

Purpose & Methods

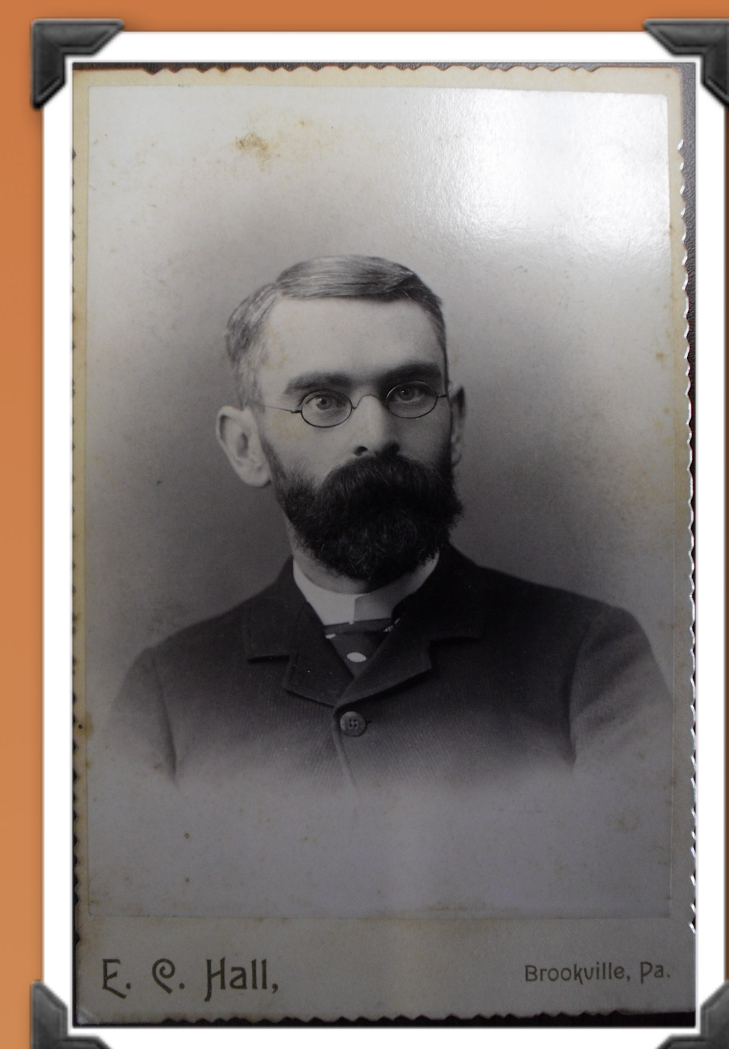
The purpose of this poster is to assist those who wish to use reliable methods to date early photographs. Most modern photographs are easier to date as digital photos often have associated metadata that includes the creation date, or we are able to recall the event within a few years. While the image itself offers valuable clues in the form of hair styles, clothing and props, the back of the photograph and the card mount itself offers valuable & reliable evidence of age. I have my own small archive of antique photos which I have used to demonstrate dating techniques. Researchers have made charts to assist with the dating of photographs by comparing photos of known, dated photographs, to those that are undetermined.



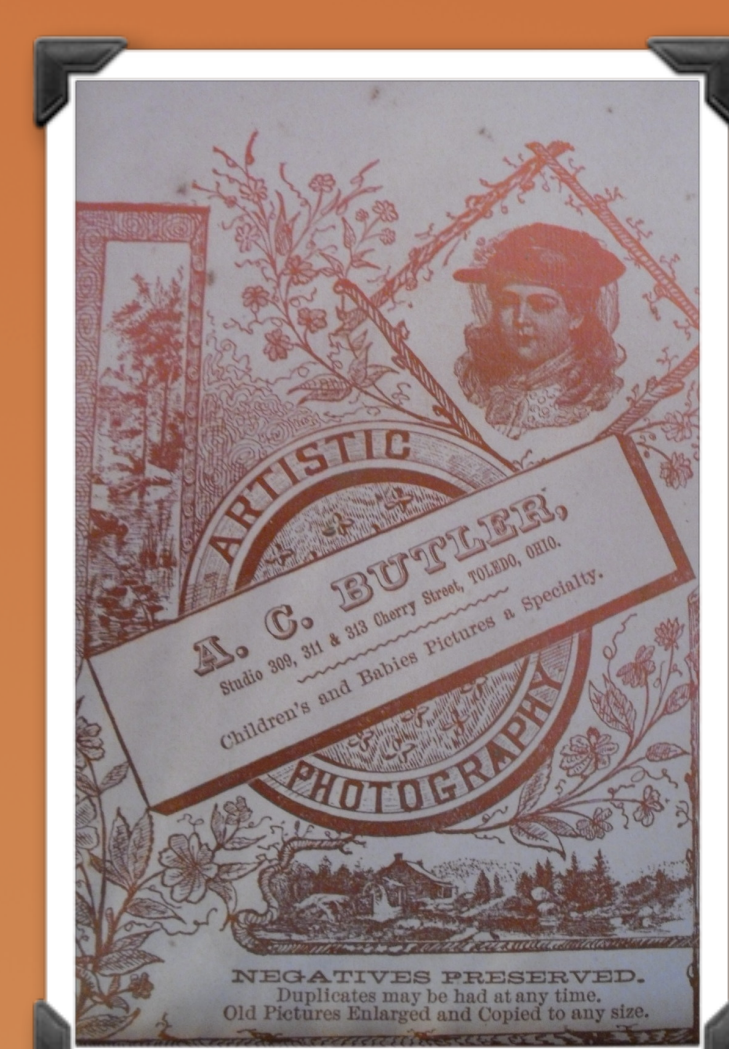
Thick & thin gold borders, buff front & back- 1864-1866



Dk. Green front & back, thin gold line, round edges- 1885-1891



Serrated & notched edge, buff front & back- 1887-1891



Backs of photos give clues to date & origin- 1890s

Thickness of card mount

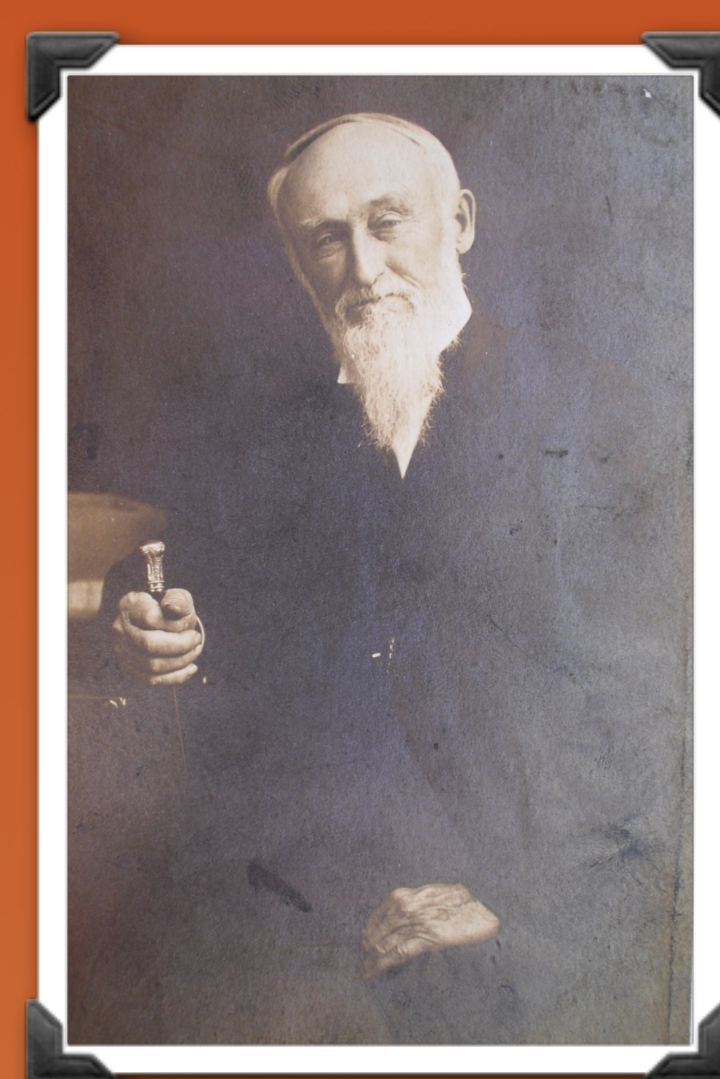
The thickness of the card stock photos are printed on has changed over time. This is only an estimation as the photographer may have mounted a photo to the card mount at a later date or may have made a copy of an older photo. Ordering reprints, particularly of famous people years after the creation of the photo was commonplace.

Thickness	Est. Date
.4mm or less	1864-1870 & 20th century
.5mm	1870-1875
.6mm	1873-1884
.7mm	1879-1888

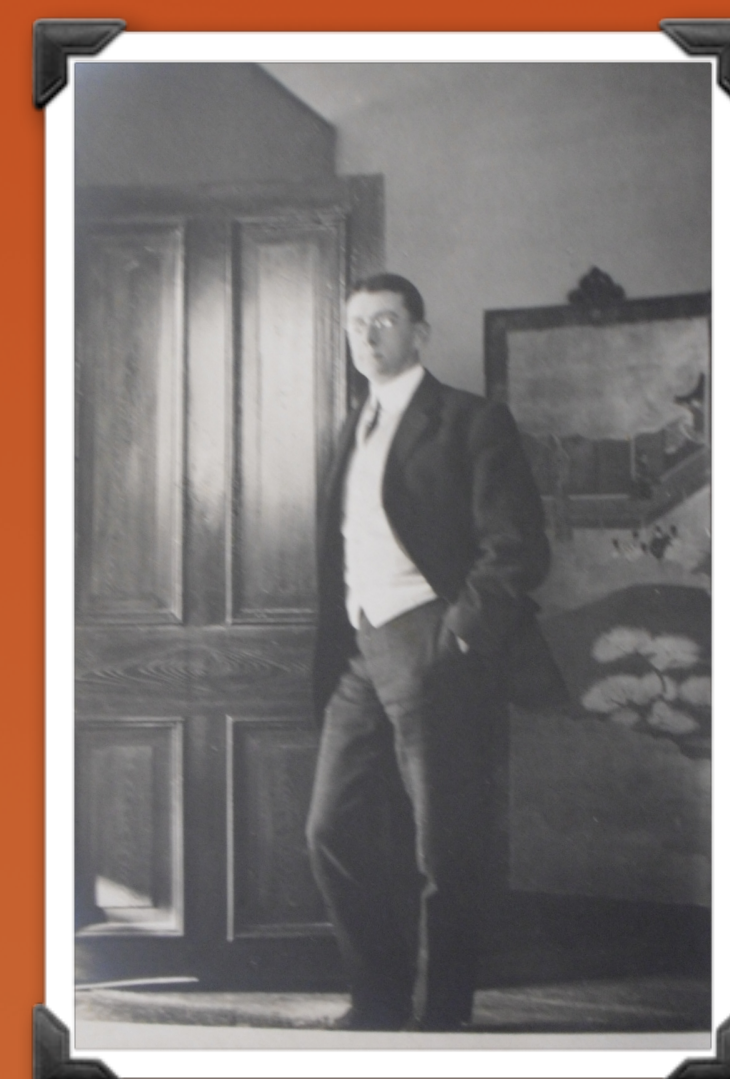
Pilling, Arnold R. (2013) ATALM.

Props

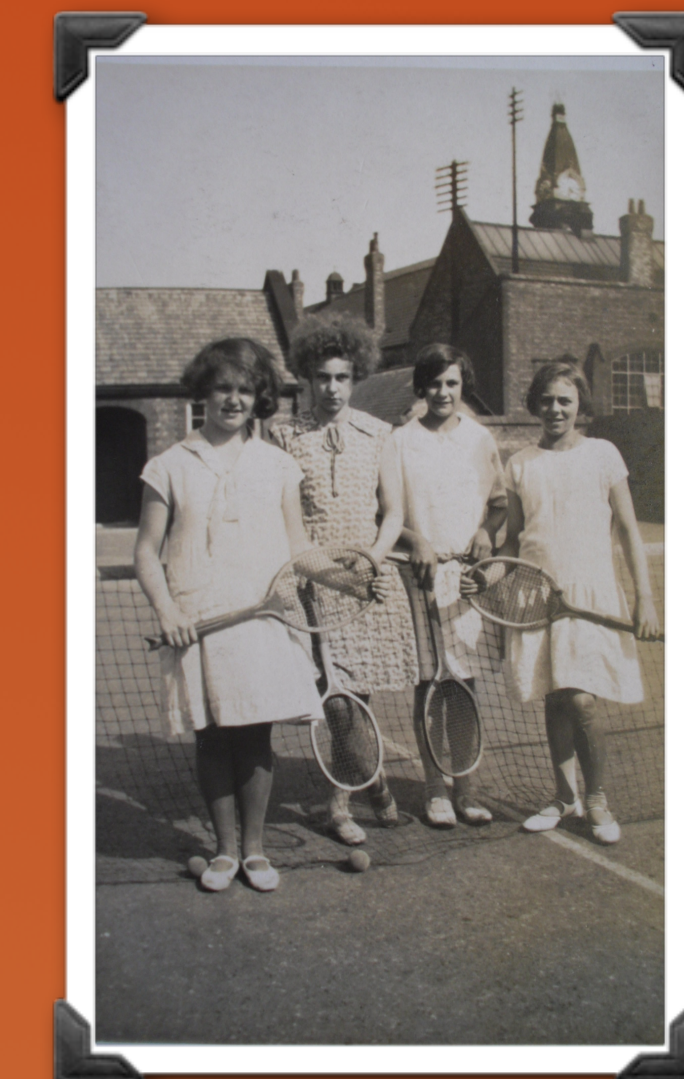
Some examples of popular props are draped curtains to one side- 1860s, Wicker chairs-1890s, Nature backdrops-1880s & Oriental screens- 1900s.



Typical photo on front of a postcard- early 1900s



Oriental screen prop, thin paper mount, thick white border- 1911



English women's tennis team, rackets & skirt length date this to- 1920s



It was popular to have portraits or photos of the famous printed on postcards. Postmark, image & location of purchase are clues to the date. This example is postmarked 6PM, October 31, 1908

Borders

Carte-de-viste: Square corners- Until 1881, Rounded- 1870-1891
Two thin gold lines - early 1860s, One thick gold line- 1884
Sm. square photo: White borders & squared corners-1940s-60s

Color of card mount

Front color	Back color	Years
Buff	Buff	1860-1900
Dk. Green	Dk. Green	1873-1892
Buff	White	1876-1892
Burgundy	Buff	1885-1887
White	Lt. Buff	1891-1900
White Border	White	1900s

And More!

Revenue Stamps

Due to American tax law, revenue stamps were placed on the back of photos from 1864-1866.

Postcards

Postmarked postcards are dated unless the mark is illegible. The stamp and the design of the back can also date these cards.

Technology

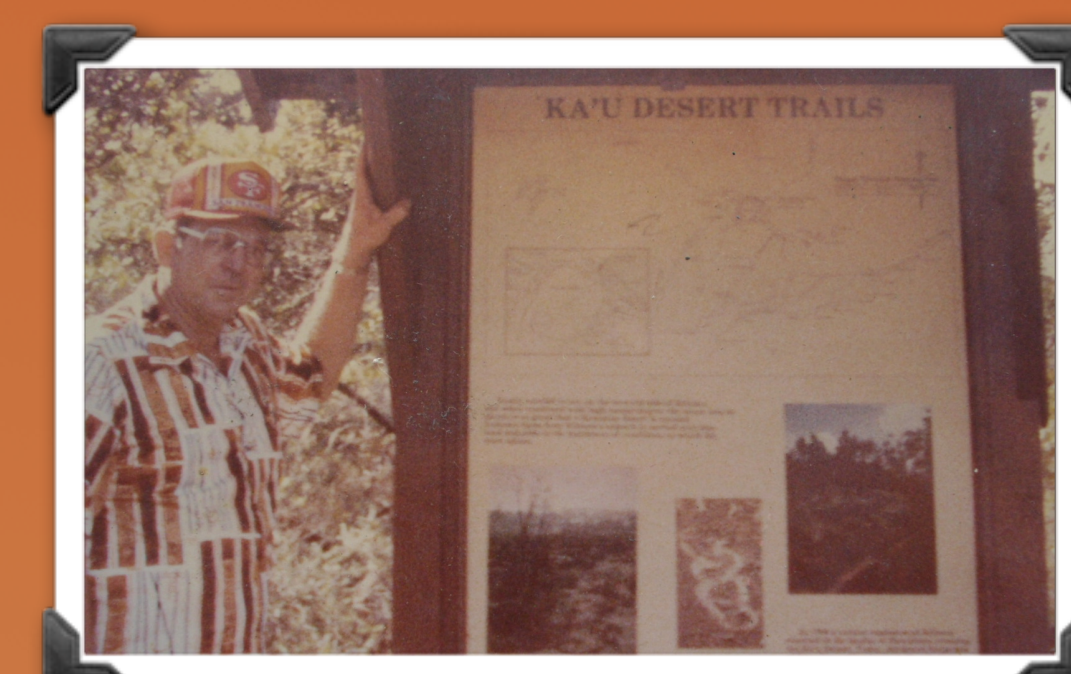
Daguerreotype (1839-1870), Calotype (1845-1855), Ambrotype (1854-1865), Tintype (1856-1940), Cabinet card (1866-1906), Stereograph (1849-1925), Wet/Dry plate print (1853-1902), Film (1888- present), Color film (1963-present), Digital images (1985-present).



Souvenir photograph sets were popular in the 1940s & 1950s



The Honolulu skyline dates this to the 1950s



The colorization of this photo dates it to the 1960s-70s

Acknowledgments & Bibliography

Cowen, Chester R. (2013) "The Photo Detective: How to Determine the Approximate Date of A Photograph," ATALM Conference.

Pilling, Arnold R. "Dating Early Photographs By Card Mounts And Other External Evidence: Tentative Suggestions." Image 17.1 (1974): 11-16. Art & Architecture Complete, Web. 6 Nov 2013.

Special mahalo to everyone involved in the 2013 ATALM Conference & the Library & Information Science department at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.



University of Hawaii at Manoa
Library and Information Science Program



Recommended Resources:

Bill's Antique Photo Pages

www.billblanton.com/date.htm#CABINET%20CARD (Accessed 11/15/13).

Bogdan, Robert and Todd Weseloh (2006) *Real Photo Postcard Guide : The People's Photography*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Cowen, Chester R. (2013) "The Photo Detective: How to Determine the Approximate Date of A Photograph," ATALM Conference.

Johnson, William S., Mark Rice, Carla Williams (Photography: from 1839 to today / George Eastman House, Rochester, NY

Gernsheim, Helmut (1986) *Concise History of Photography*, NY: Dover Publications Inc.

Mace, Henry O. (1990) *Collector's Guide to Early Photographs*, Radnor, PA: Wallace-Homestead Book Company.

Nickell, Joe (1994) *Camera clues : a Handbook for Photographic Investigation*, Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.

Peres, Michael R. ...[et al.] (2008) *Concise Focal Encyclopedia of Photography: From the First Photo on Paper to the Digital Revolution*, Boston: Focal Press.

Pilling, Arnold R. "Dating Early Photographs By Card Mounts And Other External Evidence: Tentative Suggestions." *Image 17.1* (1974): 11-16. *Art & Architecture Complete*, Web. 6 Nov 2013. (Accessed 11/15/13).

phototree.com

www.phototree.com/identify.htm (Accessed 11/15/13).

